

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 1599

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: CROSS-CURRENTS IN EGYPTIAN LIBERALIZATION

1. SUMMARY. LEBANESE NASSERIST'S ARTICLE IN AHRAM IS ILLUSTRATIVE OF FACT THAT PACE OF LIBERALISM IN EGYPT IS NEITHER EVEN NOR UNOPPOSED, AND SUGGESTS ARGUMENTS WHICH ARE BEING USED BY FACTIONS SET AGAINST SADAT'S POLITICAL CHANGES. END SUMMARY.

2. IN HIGHLY UNUSUAL ARTICLE BY SECRETARY OF LEBANESE NASSARIST ORGANIZATION, KEMAL SHATILE, AHRAM PUBLISHED WHAT IS EFFECTIVELY REBUTTAL OF RECENT ARGUMENTS FOR GREATER LIBERALIZATION OF EGYPT. IN ARTICLE, SHATILA TAKES TO TASK RECENT "CHARACTER ASSASSINATIONS" OF NASSER WHICH HOLD NASSER RESPONSIBLE FOR ERRORS AND SINS OF PAST REGIME. HE CALLS FOR CONTINUANCE OF NASSERISM BY STRENGTHENING ASU, CONTINUANCE OF PUBLIC SECTOR, SUPPORT FOR SADAT AS THE INHERITOR OF THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION, AND FAITH IN THE GAINS OF OCTOBER 6 WAR. SHATILA CONCLUDES THAT CRITICISM OF NASSER DOES NOT SERVE SADAT, BECAUSE IT WEAKENS NASSER'S CHOICE OF HIS OWN SUCCESSOR.

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2. IN SAME EDITION OF AHRAM, LI AMIN REBUTS SHATILA. HE STATES

THAT REVIEW AND REVISION IS NOT REACTIONARY, BUT HELPS CORRECT MISTAKES AS REVOLUTION PROCEEDS; HE CALLS FOR TWO-PARTY SYSTEM AFTER THE ARAB OBJECTIVES IN THE CONFLICT HAVE BEEN OBTAINED, BUT HTI SHOULD BE A DECISION OF THE PEOPLE IN ANY CASE; HE STATES THAT PUBLIC SECTOR SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED AND RECTIFIED TO CORRECT INEFFICIENCIES, NOT LIQUIDATED; AND ADDS THAT DESEQUESTRATION IS BUT A MATTER OF PLACING SOCIALISM ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

3. COMMENT: BETWEEN SHATILA'S ARTICLE AND THAT BY ALI AMIN, THE LINES SEPARATING NASSERISM AND REVISION IN EGYPT ARE CLEARLY DRAWN. IT MAY BE THAT SHATILA'S ARTICLE WAS SOLICITED BY AMIN TO INCREASE THE IMPACT OF HIS OWN REBUTTAL. NEVERTHELESS, SHATILA'S ARGUMENTS ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE NOW BEING RAISED BY EGYPTIANS WHO OPPOSE TOO FAST A PACE OF CHANGE OR, IN SOME CASES, ANY CHANGE AT ALL. DESPITE THE DRAMA OF WHAT IS BEING CALLED OUTSIDE OF EGYPT A CAMPAIGN OF DE-NASSERIZATION, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT SUCH HAS NOT YET OCCURRED. THE EGYPTIAN INTERNAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IS MOVING THROUGH ITS SECOND MAJOR CHANGE SINCE SADAT'S ARRIVAL IN POWER. UNLIKE THE FIRST, WHICH OCCURRED IN 1971 WHEN SADAT MOVED AGAINST THE POWER CLIQUE SURROUNDING SHAARAWI GOMAA, SAMI SHARAF AND ALI SABRI, THE PRESENT ONE IS FAR MORE COMPLICATED THAN A RESHUFFLE OF A RELATIVELY FEW INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND THE EXTRICATION OF THEIR PERSONAL APPARATUS WITH THE ASU. IT INVOLVES, AMONG OTHER THINGS, A READJUSTMENT OF OUTLOOK ACROSS THE BOARD TO ACCOMMODATE WHAT IS INCREASINGLY BEGINNING TO APPEAR AS A "SADATIST" POLITICAL STYLE OF GOVERNMENT, AS WELL AS THE REQUIREMENTS OF A REVITALIZED ECONOMY. BECAUSE OF THIS, AND BECAUSE OF ENTRENCHED OPPOSITION FROM GROUPS WHO STAND TO LOSE TOO MUCH BY SUCH CHANGES, THE PROCESS WILL NEITHER BE EVEN NOR RAPID. IT CANNOT, IN ANY CASE, BE SIMPLY CHARACTERIZED AS ACT OF DE-NASSERIZATION WHEREBY EVENTS SUCH AS THE REMOVAL OF NASSER'S PHOTOGRAPHS FROM SOME OFFICES ARE TAKEN TO BE PART OF A GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE PREVIOUS REGIME, WHEN IN FACT THEY ARE MORE THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCES OF EGYPT'S READJUSTMENT.

4. WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SHATILA'S AND AMIN'S ARTICLES, TWO MATTERS ARE WORTH SPECIFIC COMMENT. ONE RELATES TO SHATILA'S

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REMARK ABOUT "STRENGTHENING THE ASU" AND TO AMIN'S CALL FOR A FUTURE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM. IN RECENT WEEKS THERE HAS BEEN MUCH TALK ABOUT A MULT-PARTY SYSTEM, EITHER IN PLACE OF THE ASU OR WITHIN IT. AT THIS POINT, IT APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WILL OCCUR: THE CURRENTS FOR THIS KIND OF POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION DO NOT APPEAR STRONG ENOUGH, FOR ONE THING, AND FOR ANOTHER IT WOULD TEND TO INTRODUCE COMPLICATIONS INTO WHAT HAS BEEN FOR SADAT A WELCOME PERIOD

OF INTERNAL CALM. SECONDLY, THERE CONTINUES TO BE STRONG
OPPOSITION WITHIN BOTH THE BUREAUCRACY AND SOME SECTIONS OF
THE ESTABLISHMENT TO THE IDEA OF "LIQUIDATION OF THE PUBLIC
SECTOR". THE MAJOR CORRECTIONS IN THIS AREA THAT APPEARED
POSSIBLE SOME MONTHS AGO ARE BECOMING MORE DIFFICULT TO
ARRANGE.
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